



# TRADITIONS AND REMINISCENCES OF THE RELIEF CHURCH

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THERE are points in the history and progress of the Relief Church which are liable to be forgotten, but which it would be a pity to overlook. Some of these are of importance as they make plain what was the contribution which this little church brought into the religious life of Scotland, and is now an integral part of the faith of the Church of Scotland.

As is well known, the Relief Church owed its existence to the deposition of Thomas Gillespie, minister of Carnock, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In its origin it was neither a Secession nor a Disruption. It was due to an expulsion by the General Assembly. In this it differs both from the Secession and the Free Church. The misguided action of the General Assembly was responsible for its existence. Many in the ranks of the Church of Scotland evidently felt that the action of the Assembly was high-handed, hasty, foolish and unjust. At the very next meeting of Assembly efforts were made to rescind the deed of deposition and repon Gillespie. These were only defeated on a vote by a majority of three, and that considered by some as due to the pressure of the Lord High Commissioner.

Among Gillespie's friends in the Assembly was the Rev. Dr. John Erskine, latterly of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, where he had Drs Robertson, the leader against Gillespie, for colleague. Sir Walter Scott, in *Guy Mannering*, speaks of Erskine in terms of genuine admiration, as a man in whose preaching the Calvinism of the Kirk of Scotland was ably supported, yet made the basis of a sound system of practical morals which should neither shelter the sinner under the cloak of speculative faith, or of peculiarity of opinion, or leave him loose to the waves of unbelief or schism. Erskine's friendship with Gillespie was of old standing. He was grandson of Colonel Erskine of Carnock to whose patronage Gillespie owed his presentation to the charge at Carnock. Gillespie's stand and the deposition did not rupture the old friendship. When twenty years later a new effort was made in favour of an endeavour to secure the return of Gillespie to the Church of Scotland, he lent his aid to it. Others went as far as to say that "instead of censure Gillespie deserves the thanks of this Church . . . for the firmness with which he maintained that important branch of subordination in our constitution,

the subordination of the Assembly itself to the Standing Laws." (Walker of Dundonald.)

These efforts proved unavailing. It should be noticed that Gillespie himself took no steps, and gave no indication of any wish, to be restored to the ministry of the Church of Scotland. This is important in view of what was said by Erskine after Gillespie's death three years later (19th Jan., 1774). In the preface to a work on "Temptation" (by Gillespie) which Erskine published after Gillespie's death, referring to the strain of the nine years from his deposition during which he stood alone, Erskine said it "led him to ask assistance and to concur with others in erecting the Presbytery of Relief. Yet he was far from advising congregations to enter into, or remain in connection with, that presbytery, who could retain the rights of private judgment and procure ministers with whose gifts they could be edified in full communion with the Church of Scotland; and no person more sincerely rejoiced in the creation of chapels of ease for that purpose as what might gradually supersede the necessity of the Presbytery of Relief. Nay, it is well known that he had it much at heart that his church at Dunfermline might, at his death, if not sooner, become such a chapel."

There are two points to notice in this statement. The one is the implication that the initiation of the formation of the Presbytery of Relief did not lie with Gillespie, but that he was only drawn into it in concurrence with others. The original minute of Presbytery does not suggest any hesitancy on his part. The more serious matter is the statement of his attitude towards Chapels of Ease and the desire that his church in Dunfermline should become such a chapel. To begin with it would be interesting to know of the formation or existence within the Church of Scotland of chapels with the privileges stated by Dr. Erskine. As regards such a project for Gillespie's church, everything points in a different direction. On Gillespie's death his elder half-brother, Robert, who was factor for the Erskine estate of Carnock, did make an effort to have the church and congregation handed over to the Church of Scotland, and his conduct in this was very strange. Yet give your opponent the benefit of the doubt and it may be explicable. Robert was at first a valiant supporter of Thomas, and was active in the starting of South College Street Church in Edinburgh. It seems as if at first Baine, who was the first minister of S. College Street, may have thought that chapels of ease in a certain relation with the Church of Scotland were a possibility. At the first communion season he took his congregation to Lady Yester's Church. Robert Gillespie may have been of the same opinion and might plead that in justification of the course he pursued. The church built for Gillespie in Dunfermline was not the property of the congregation, but of subscribers who sympathised with Thomas Gillespie. On his

death, without ever consulting the congregation, Robert Gillespie called a meeting of subscribers and proposed that the Church should be handed over to the Church of Scotland as a Chapel of Ease. Lengthened litigation followed, but lapsed with no satisfactory issue. The building was not worth the cost of fighting for it. It was allowed to fall into the hands of the Church of Scotland ; but the congregation remained steadfast in the Presbytery of Relief.

This is part of the story of the commencement of the Relief Church. Gillespie's deposition and the reason of it, his nine years' stand alone, the facts about his church and congregation, all go to show the spirit which animated, and remained characteristic of, the Relief Church. It was formed for " the Relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges." It afforded an asylum for those who felt aggrieved ; it welcomed those who sought its fellowship ; but it pursued no aggressive tactics or sought to propagate itself where there was no local demand for it.

That is brought out by a review of the origins of the congregations which associated themselves with it. There is no need to describe the cases of Dunfermline, Jedburgh and Colinsburgh, the three congregations which formed the original presbytery. There was also little difference in the cases of Blair Logie and Auchtermuchty, the first to accede. In both cases disputed settlements led to the formation of congregations which then applied to the Relief Presbytery and were accepted. A special interest attaches to the case of Bellshill, as it was the first congregation in the West of Scotland. Like the others it was the outcome of opposition to the settlement in the Parish of Bothwell of an unwelcome presentee, the Rev. James Baillie, the father of the noted authoress, Joanna Baillie. There was no objection to him on the ground of character, competence or scholarship. He later became Professor of Divinity in Glasgow University. He was a man of refinement and good Scottish family. But he was a typical Moderate, the nominee of the tutors of the Duke of Hamilton (then a minor), and his Call was signed by only eight persons. Presbytery and Assembly alike hesitated about the call, but Dr. Robertson's party forced it through. The protesters then quietly withdrew after a final proposal which they made was rejected. The proposal was a request that lines might be granted " to persons who wished to observe sealing ordinances in neighbouring parishes," those persons meanwhile continuing to attend Mr. Baillie's ministrations that " they might judge for themselves." On this being refused fifty men who became the founders of Bellshill congregation signed a bond (a miniature facsimile of which appears in the Rev. W. R. Thomson's History of the congregation), binding them as " fully resolved to form ourselves into a body or society for having the worship of God celebrated to us by a minister of our own



choosing." They were no schismatics. When they proceeded to build their Church, it was not set down in close challenging proximity to the church from which they withdrew, but at Bellshill, two miles away. Their concern was for evangelical religion. The preaching of the Moderates was sound morality. But the soundest morality without a direct religious appeal to the individual has a serious defect. It did not stir the conscience. It neither evoked penitence faith and zeal nor aroused antagonism or opposition. Morality without a spiritual dynamic does not bring a man into the presence of God or face to face with the salvation in Christ.

The next congregation to join the Relief Presbytery was South College Street, Edinburgh. There is a very full account of this in Struthers' History, and also in a *Centenary Memorial* by John Dickson, which appeared in 1866. The noticeable points in this case are these. The congregation came into existence as usual over a matter of patronage, but not of the usual kind. The point in dispute was not over a presentee, but as to those whom the right of presentation belonged. Had the Town Council the sole right of presentation or only a joint power along with the ministers of the city and general session? The question was carried to the House of Lords whose decision was that the privilege belonged exclusively to the Town Council. This decision gave great offence, and a movement was set on foot in the city to form a congregation free from the bonds of patronage. Robert Gillespie, Thomas Gillespie's brother, took a leading part in the movement and contributed liberally towards it. Thomas Gillespie was consulted as to the dissenting body with which they should endeavour to associate the congregation—Secession or Relief. Naturally he said Relief, and his advice was followed. Through the Rev. Alex. Simpson, minister of Bellshill, approaches were made to the Rev. James Baine, of the High Church, Paisley, who in response resigned his charge in Paisley and accepted the call from South College Street.

The opening sentences of the call are noteworthy. "We, the under-written inhabitants of the City of Edinburgh, and its neighbourhood, having built a house for the public worship of God, not as separatists from the Protestant Churches or the worthy ministers and members of the Established Church in our land with whom we can freely hold communion, being of one mind with us in the faith, worship and institutions of Jesus Christ; but we have taken the above step to vindicate our Christian and most natural right to choose the pastor who is to labour among us in holy things in opposition to the abuse of the power of patronage, the pernicious effects of which are so heavily felt in all corners and particularly in this city. And partly that the truth and purity of the gospel may remain among us and be transmitted to posterity." This call to Mr. Baine was accepted, and South College Street congregation

soon held a leading place in the denomination. It is worth mentioning that it was with much difficulty a site was secured for the Church.

Campbeltown and Glasgow were the next congregations to join, but there is no need to enter into detail with regard to them. Attention should be paid to the principles for which all the congregations which joined the Relief Church were called to take their stand and especially to their attitude as to communion with those of other denominations. That was stated by Gillespie at the very outset when he was left to stand alone. When he proceeded to dispense the Lord's Supper he took as his motto, "I hold communion with all that visibly hold the Head and with them only." That became at once a characteristic feature of the Relief testimony. It is a commonplace of Christian communion to-day prevailing in almost all the Churches in Scotland except the Plymouth Brethren, Close Baptists and the Scottish Episcopal Church. It was a novelty in Gillespie's day, and to the Relief Church belongs the credit of championing it in Scotland and carrying this truly catholic spirit into every Church with which it has united. It did not do so, however, without trouble in its own ranks and misrepresentation at the hands of others. So early as 1769 the question was raised by certain elders of the Dunse congregation, who objected to their minister, Mr. Monteith, going to assist an Independent minister at his communion, but the Synod supported him. Later two of the ministers—Cowan of Colinsburgh and Cruden of Glasgow—took up a position of hostility to the prevailing view of the Synod and withdrew from the Relief Church.

Outside of their own ranks the Relief principle of free communion was assailed from many quarters in a battle of Tracts, and especially from Seceders who regarded this principle as contrary to the position of the Scottish people and Church, bound by the Solemn League and Covenant. Free Communion was represented as playing fast and loose with the type of faith and character which fitted a man to sit at the Lord's Table. Such a charge could only have been made in ignorance or with the deliberate intention of misleading; and though it was successfully exposed and refuted, it was again and again trumped up until free communion as properly understood came to be recognised throughout the Churches as the true Christian position.

As late as 1862, however, the Rev. William M'Dougall, of Thread Street, Paisley, a true son of the Relief Church, had to maintain the principle against a Free Church minister of that town, the Rev. William Fraser. Into the particulars of the clash between them it is not necessary to go. It is fully set forth in a pamphlet, published by M'Dougall, containing the letters which passed between them, and a lengthened closing letter by M'Dougall, which shows that dying embers of all the early misrepresentations of the Relief principle still smouldered. The whole

discussion arose over pulpit exchanges between M'Dougall and Established Church ministers, with many of whom he was on friendly terms. Among them was the Rev. James Macgregor, later of St. Cuthbert's, but then in Paisley. To digress for a moment, M'Dougall was a character. He could not resist a joke even at the expense of his dearest friend. Once on calling for Macgregor he was told that he was not in. He had gone out "tae straucht-himself." Said M'Dougall, "then I'll not wait. He'll be a while." In another case on meeting a man who had left M'Dougall's congregation in high dudgeon because M'Dougall had rebuked him for sleeping in church, he hailed him heartily: "We're as guid freens as ever we were. Wha's kirk are ye sleepin' in now?"

It has to be admitted that the Relief Church did not produce much theological literature. Its publications were mainly pamphlets in maintenance and defence of their positions on inter-communion and freedom from patronage. There was one of their number, however, who made a more elaborate study of their doctrinal position, the Rev. Patrick Hutchison, of St. Ninian's, and later of Canal Street, Paisley. It was while in his earlier charge that he addressed himself to the task of setting forth in a systematic form what were the doctrinal beliefs of the Relief Church. Struthers devoted the most of two chapters of his *History* to a summary of Hutchison's work and published a section of it in an appendix. Hutchison's treatise is twofold in its object. It is partly an apologetic, expounding the differences between the Relief doctrine and the views of Seceders and the Established Church, and partly a presentation of Christian truth as understood and taught by the Relief Church. This is testily put in the closing paragraph of the summary given in Struthers' Appendix. "And now let the candid world judge whether those professed witnesses for truth are not as forward as wise, who injuriously charge the Relief ministers with deluding the generation and relieving them from the yoke of Christ. If to preach the above mentioned system of divine truth is to relieve the generation from the Redeemer's yoke, what sort of truths do those men themselves preach to bring them under it?"

Two little publications, however, have a value far beyond their size. The one is Struthers' *Explanation of the Shorter Catechism*. There is a very modest preface to the first edition in which the author disclaims any pretensions to originality. Its aim is to "stimulate judgment and memory" and yet not "damp the scholar's energy and self-application." Study and use of it will agree that it fulfils its aim. The other brochure is also catechetical. It is in two parts published separately called respectively "Plain Catechetical Instructions on Christian Baptism," and "Plain Catechetical Instructions for Young Communicants designed to assist them in forming scriptural views of the Lord's Supper." They are



by the Rev. John Barr, of Glasgow. The latter of these publications of Mr. Barr's ran into sixteen editions. It is not surprising, for with all their simplicity these little books are pointed, practical and spiritually quickening.

A valuable source of information as to the angle from which the ministers of the Relief Church approached the Gospel and as to their intellectual calibre and preaching power is provided by a volume of Sermons, twenty-four in number, by Relief ministers and published in 1836. From a study of these discourses certain features stand out conspicuously. They are definitely evangelical. One or two of them are discussions of doctrine dealing with the divinity of our Lord and the Atonement. The majority are definitely based on doctrine, the doctrine of the Shorter Catechism, but in every case handled with an eye to the practical application of the doctrine. The treatment is textual and expository. A striking feature is the large range of quotation from Scripture and its appositeness and illumination. The style is rhetorical, replete with illustration, but not anecdotal or from poetry. Every sermon is personal in its appeal, and calls for decision. Christ and His claims are the principal themes. What is noteworthy is that references to the particular positions for which the Relief Church stood are almost wholly absent. When such do occur it is never as the theme of the discourse, but only incidentally and in the passing. The sermons are long, and it was almost imperative that they should not be read in the delivery. Indeed in the case of William Anderson there was opposition in the presbytery to his ordination on the score that he read his sermons, and he compromised on the promise that he would abstain from reading for eighteen months, and if by that time he found it impossible to continue, he would resign. In a letter of my grandfather's he describes the agonies of his efforts to commit the sermon with which he was going to commence his ministry in Strathaven. Till four o'clock on the Sabbath morning he wrestled with the words, felt at times like committing suicide or fleeing from the place, till at last he lay down utterly exhausted.

Among the contributors to the volume of Sermons are two men who later occupied the Professors' chair—William Lindsay and Neil M'Michael. At first, for the training of men for its ministry, the Relief Church was content that their students after completing their Arts course should attend the Divinity Classes at the Universities. This was supplemented by very careful supervision and examination by presbyteries. At a later date it was found desirable to set up a Theological Hall and appoint a Professor. There were two reasons for this step. For one thing it was discovered that pressure was being put on the more promising of their students at the University to induce them to enter the Established Church. For another, when such efforts were unsuccessful, difficulties



began to be put in the way of the attendance of Relief students at the University classes. The first occupant of the professorial chair was the Rev. James Thomson, of Thread Street Church, Paisley. He was appointed in 1824, and he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Glasgow University three years later. The Hall assembled for nearly three months in the autumn. The studies were supplemented by exercises prescribed by and submitted to the Presbyteries. They included among them the preparation by the student of a system of doctrine. Among my grandfather's books I discovered a neatly bound volume of three or four hundred pages which contained his carefully written out scheme. Other exercises were expository treatment of prescribed passages from the Old and New Testaments, examinations in Greek and Hebrew, and a sermon to be preached before the Presbytery. Sometimes the criticism by the professor of the sermon preached before him was more plain than pleasant. Professor M'Michael had a curious habit of interjecting phrases like "yes aye, perhaps," "of course," and so on into his remarks, and criticising a sermon on the labourers engaged at various hours remarked, "This lecture was prepared at the eleventh hour, perhaps; and it's not worth a penny, of course."

With a Divinity Hall meeting in autumn during the University recess it was possible for a student after his first and second years at the Arts classes of the University to let the first years of his divinity course overlap the later sessions of his Arts course. When the Arts course was finished, for two or three years the student had fully nine months free, and it was a common habit for a student to take on the position of a school teacher (perhaps run a school of his own, as my grandfather did) or act as tutor in a private family. When once his studies were over he was licensed and became a probationer, very much at the command of the Church as to the vacancies he might preach in and where he should go as occasional supply. In the earlier days for this itinerating he had to provide himself with a pony. As supply he was entitled to board and lodging, generally at the manse, from week-end to week-end. Sometimes a housewife would try to give a broad hint that he should leave on the Monday. She might be heard through the house bidding the serving lass "boil twa eggs for the lad; he has a lang journey before him," only thus evoking another injunction from another voice, "boil three; he's gaun tae bide." If the appointment was to a vacancy, the probationer had to preach there three Sabbaths and remain on the spot meantime that the people might have full time to judge of him. When ordination came the questions asked give a good indication of what a Relief minister stood for. Doctrinally the questions were very similar to those common to the Established Church and the Secession. But in assenting to the Westminster Confession of Faith, there was definite qualification

as to the power of the civil magistrate to interfere in religious concerns, and there was a question to this effect : " Do you regard patronage as an invasion of the rights of Christian people, and do you engage to maintain and defend their liberties against all encroachment ? " And there was this also : " Do you promise to submit yourself in the Lord willingly, humbly, and in the spirit of meekness to the admonitions of your brethren in the ministry and according to your power to maintain the unity and peace of the Relief Church notwithstanding whatever trouble or persecution may arise ? " These questions are to be found in the Regulations of the Relief Church adopted by the Synod in 1832.

It is worth while to recall how the congregations of the Relief Church generally took shape and provided for the situation. In practically every case at the outset a body of people, indignant at the way in which patrons and the prevailing, domineering party in the General Assemblies disregarded the wishes of the people in a vacant charge as to the minister to be settled over them, held a meeting, proceeded to build a church, and then applied to the Relief Church to be received as a congregation. The funds for building the church were often provided by individuals who became proprietors of the church, and as such were entitled to so many seats in it. To defray stipend and other expenses collections were taken. A curious situation arose as to the collections, and it explains the important place which the Board of Management occupied in Relief congregations. In *The History of Colinsburgh*, one of the three original members of the Relief Presbytery, the Rev. Robert Dick, the author, tells that at the first service held in Colinsburgh in the open-air when Gillespie preached, the collection amounted to six pounds. " A few days afterwards it was widely rumoured that the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, the Established Church minister, intended to claim this money, as the elders who had taken charge of it had not severed their connection with the Parish Church. Accordingly, the next time Mr. Gillespie preached . . . the collection was taken by the principal managers in accordance with legal advice, and public intimation was made that the money to be collected was for the building of the meeting house and other uses of the congregation. This led to the practice of managers, instead of elders, taking charge of the collections at the church doors, which has been continued ever since." There is a similar note in the *History of the Falkirk West United Presbyterian Church*, by F. C. Wade, the son of one of its ministers. He says : " The separation of the sacred from the secular in the congregational affairs, and the extensive powers of the managers, had a historical foundation. The early congregations were afraid lest the law of the land might hold that funds, raised by their sessions, which in many cases were composed of elders ordained in the Established Church, might be claimed by the session of the parish. Gillespie and

Thomas Boston had both taken legal advice on the point, and were advised that the collections were safe, but to make sure, the elders were kept clear of all financial matters, and managers were appointed to raise and administer the funds and hold the property." This is what is at the back of the clause in the Regulations of the Relief Church, which says : "The managers shall collect the seat-rents and receive such collections as are made at the Church doors." It is well to remember, however, that this gave the managers no authority in things ecclesiastical, for a further regulation reads as follows : "The managers shall not interfere in their official capacity with the ecclesiastical business of the church, with funds vested in the Session, and subject to their control, or with collections made for the poor or other religious and benevolent purposes."

The arrangement about payment of stipend was remarkable. Representatives of the congregation gave the minister a bond, drawn up on stamped paper and signed by each representative making them responsible personally for the regular payment of the stipend at the beginning of each quarter. Such a bond was given to my grandfather, John French, when he was settled in Strathaven in 1820. It was in my possession until it was lent to the Exhibition at the Union Assembly of 1929, when it disappeared. It bound the signatories to pay the stipend quarterly. In the event of failure, interest at 5% was to accrue, while in the event of total failure the signatories were to be put to the horn. Record of similar bonds are mentioned in the histories of other congregations.

Many of the Relief congregations were small and finance was a serious problem. I remember my father telling me how as a boy of twelve, to help the funds of Arthur Street Church, Edinburgh, of which his father, later minister at Irvine, was an elder during his student days, he was sent along with another boy to ask for subscriptions from the Rev. David Crawford of Portobello, the minister of Musselburgh and the minister of Dalkeith—a good long round for boys of twelve on their feet ! The poverty of the people is also the explanation of the plainness of their churches, and not any objection to artistic beauty, and a little intelligent consideration of the case should defend them from the wholesale abuse of dilettanti exquisites of the present day.

The stipends in the early days were very small, often not more than £50 a year with an allowance for sacramental expenses. With so small an income it was not possible for a minister to save anything for a rainy day or for a widow, or even to pay a premium to an Insurance Company. It speaks well for the Relief Church that within a few years of its formation it took steps for the starting of a Widows' and Orphans' Fund. In 1775 a Committee was appointed by the Synod to take the necessary steps, and a Fund was set on foot. For a number of years, in accordance with rules approved for its administration, a statement of its funds



was annually submitted to the Synod. All the ministers were expected to join, and at the outset an annual contribution of £2 was required. Soon even this amount was found to be too exacting and was reduced first to £1 10/- and later £1. Eventually the whole business was separated from Synod control and set on an independent basis, and advantage taken of the Friendly Societies Act. In due course it united with a similar Society which had been started by the Secession Church, and the Society still survives as the United Presbyterian Ministers' Friendly Society. Its history is recorded in a brochure prepared by the late Rev. James Jeffrey, D.D., in 1919, when he was President of the Society.

Before leaving financial considerations it may be worth while to mention a kindly custom, not peculiar to the Relief Church, at the settlement of a minister. It is common practice now to present a minister with gown and hood; but then what was presented was a complete suit of ministerial clothes with hat and a pair of boots. That I received at my settlement in Kilmarnock so late as 1883.

The Relief Church was the first among the Scottish Presbyterian Churches to introduce hymns into the regular church services and to compile a hymn-book. There was already in common use the collection of Scripture paraphrases, authorised by the Church of Scotland in 1781 and published along with the metrical version of the Psalms. This collection of paraphrases was the sequel to a selection issued for private use in 1745. The first hymn book was that authorised and issued by the Synod of Relief in 1794. It was compiled by a Synodical Committee from three collections of hymns prepared by each of three congregations separately for their own use. The earliest edition I have seen of the Relief Hymnbook is of the year 1801. There was later a dainty little pocket edition issued in 1833, of which I have a copy given to my father, then a very small boy in 1834. At a later date a collection of tunes was published, entitled *The Sacred Choir*, which states on its title page that it is "a collection of music adapted to the Psalms, Paraphrases and Hymns in general use in Scotland, and especially to the Collection of Hymns sanctioned by the Relief Synod." It contains 171 tunes, a metrical index, brief notes on the tunes and their authors, and samples of verses for practising the tunes.

The Relief Church was a small body. Its ministers were known to and on intimate terms with one another, and they used great plainness of speech to and of each other. There were some striking personalities among them. There were the two branches, for instance, of the Anderson family, of whom a racy account is given in a volume entitled *The Croft House Andersons*, by One of Themselves, and published for family circulation. The family took its rise from William Anderson, a prominent man in the Carron Iron Works, and at the same time a small farmer.

He was one of those who in 1771 took part in the formation of the Falkirk Congregation, of which he became an elder. The Croft House section of his descendants was so called from the house in Ceres in which this, the younger, branch took up its dwelling when David Anderson, a grandson of William, was settled as minister there. He was the son of John Anderson, of Kilsyth, settled there in 1793. His son, Robert, was called as his colleague, and between them the Anderson ministry there lasted for nearly a hundred years. The outstanding figure was John Anderson of Kilsyth's eldest son, William. He was the famous minister of John Street, Glasgow. He was tall, lithe, blackavised, with piercing eyes. He was an inveterate snuffer. I have heard my mother tell of the little brown trail on his pillow from a stand by the bedside where a packet of snuff lay to his head. He was the redoubtable champion of many a cause. As the tablet to his memory in John Street says, he was "a fearless advocate of every good cause and an eloquent denouncer of all unrighteousness." For instance, in the Synod of 1829, seconded by his father, he led a forlorn hope in advocacy of liberty to use the organ in public worship. One of my earliest recollections is of hearing him preach at a special service to raise funds for the running of soup kitchens to provide a meal for poor children at a halfpenny a bowl.

The Monday after the half-yearly Sacramental season was often a day of re-union of ministerial friends who had been assiting their brethren. I recall such a gathering at dinner on a Monday afternoon in my father's house in Carlton Place, Glasgow. At it were my grandfather, James Drummond of Irvine, William M'Dougall of Thread Street, Paisley, Ramage of Berkeley Street, and Gunion of Greenock. There is room for remarks on each of them. The Relief Church, Irvine, is to this day on the roll of congregations of the Church of Scotland, the Relief Church. On one occasion when some repairs on the church were required, it was found that wooden pillars which supported the gallery were all eaten into by dry rot at their base, and so instead of supporting the gallery, the gallery was holding them up. Ramage was a fine preacher, very fastidious about his literary style, a handsome man and particular about his dress; and he was known among his brethren as "the pernickety yin." His daughter was married to a Mr. Gibson, a brother of the ladies whose name is associated with Sinaitic manuscripts, and who were known in Cambridge as "the Gibson girls." M'Dougall I have already spoken of with his dry humour. Gunion was very plain looking, and rumour said that when some one asked how he would recognise Mr. Gunion at the Synod, he replied, "look out for the ugliest man there. That will be Mr. Gunion." Another manse lady, wife of Mr. Symington of Kilmarnock, when asked how she had come to marry him, said, "He socht me, and socht me, and said he wouldna want me; so I took him to get quit o'

him." Another minister, pompous and grandiloquent, and whose attitude to his brethren and account of himself tended towards drawing the long bow, was at length brought to earth by an exasperated brother who could stand it no longer: "Dae ye ken what they ca' you? They ca' you 'the Baron' (Baron Munchausen) for tellin' lees." Then there was William Becket of Rutherglen, a dainty little figure, the editor of the Relief Magazine and then of the "U.P. Mag." He was the author of the peculiarly appropriate music of "Wee Willie Winkie rins through the toon." A favourite with everybody, his brethren who saw him content to stay on in the outskirts while his sons went into the city and made a place for themselves in Glasgow business circles, recognised his counterpart in one fine old scripture character and playfully called him "Mr. Barzillai of Rogelim." Among the most valuable portraits in the Assembly Halls is a Paul Chalmers. It is a living picture of the Rev. James Kirkwood, of St. James' Place, Edinburgh. The attitude, the look, make it easy to understand the remark of a friend of his when told that Kirkwood had applied for a colleague. "A colleague!" he said. "The body! he'll dauner on noo till the resurrection."

I'm afraid you will think that I shall do the same with reminiscences and I must call a halt. But these pleasantries and many others that were fireside talk in Relief Manses in my boyhood serve to reveal the homely, family feeling that pervaded the Relief Church. Something of this was lost when they united with the United Secession, and still more in later and larger unions. With all the advantages of larger unions, there are possibilities of intimacy and fellowship in smaller communions that are not to be despised. But the spirit in which the Relief Church viewed union is revealed in what my mother told me of what transpired in my grandfather's manse on the evening when the union with the Secession was consummated. Several of the leaders gathered there, and they danced for joy with the children.